

Editorial Note

Taking issue with the 'Vancouver style' into the twenty-first century

The Ulster Medical Journal has, for many years, been a proponent of 'Vancouver style', as described in Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals¹ - devised by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.² A standard journal article is referenced with the authors/editor, followed by the title, journal name (as abbreviated in *Index Medicus*), year, volume, month, issue number (in brackets) and pages as illustrated in the following example:

O'Neill SB, McCann JP. Unrecognised spinal cord compression as a cause of morbidity. *Ulster Med J* 2004; 73(1): 89-91.

The Vancouver system of referencing allows that a journal with continuous pagination throughout a volume (as most journals do), may omit the month and issue. In the Ulster Medical Journal, the sub-editor checks all references for accuracy, and (although not written policy) inserts the issue number after the volume (if not added already by the author).

We have, from this issue, updated our instructions to authors to inclusion of the issue number as journal policy. What difference does adding the issue number make? Until recently, when manually searching for articles using hard copy bibliographic references such as *Index Medicus*, or the bound copies of the journals themselves, inclusion or omission of the issue number was immaterial - continuous pagination enabled the reader to quickly find the article in question in a specific volume.

The advent of online journals and digital searching media has changed how articles are published. Many journals are available online, and are accessed using menu selection. Initially the required year is selected, followed by the issue and thereafter the page numbers. Often menu selection does not include page numbers, though invariably the issue number is included instead.

In the Ulster Medical Journal, we are updating ourselves in line with other journals (at present mostly those published on line but increasingly those which publish both online and print versions). This small alteration in the policy should assist writers locate their source material more easily.

The Vancouver system includes instructions on referencing other material obtained from the Internet.¹ These follow the principles behind citing print sources, namely, a reference is a detailed description of the item from which you obtained your information and is used to acknowledge the work of others. Lastly, it should contain sufficient information for someone else to trace the item. Thus quoting a website's address e.g. www.nap.edu is similar to quoting a journal title alone. The proper reference may be as follows:

Foley KM, Gelband H, editors. Improving palliative care for cancer [monograph on the Internet]. Washington: National Academy Press; 2001 [cited 2002 Jul 9]. Available from: <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309074029/html/>.

We hope readers will find this change helpful for both submissions to the journal and for those searching it online.³

REFERENCES

1. http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html
2. <http://www.icmje.org>
3. Logan JI. <http://www.ums.ac.uk> *Ulster Med J* 2004; 72(1): 1.

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